

Fact Sheet: Important Information on NRS Changes for PY 2006

The U.S. Department of Education recently announced that, effective July 1, 2006, adult ESL programs across the country will need to begin using revised ESL Educational Functioning Level descriptors for National Reporting System (NRS) accountability requirements. To help with this transition, the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) created this flyer to provide background information and to help adult educators understand how these revised descriptors will affect score reporting for our adult ESL assessments (*BEST and BEST Plus*). We hope you find this information helpful and invite you to contact us with any questions you may have.

Changes in the National Reporting System

In February 2005, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE), in partnership with the American Institutes of Research (AIR), released a document titled "Proposed Changes for Program Year 2006 and Beyond."

The changes were finalized in winter 2006, to take effect on July 1, 2006. The ESL Educational Functioning Levels are revised to eliminate the High Advanced Level and split the Beginning Level into two levels (Low Beginning and High Beginning).

For more information about the rationale for this revision or to view the revised NRS descriptors, visit the NRS Web site at www.nrsweb.org. Click on NRS changes for Program Year 2006.

Changes in Student Performance Level (SPL) Descriptors

The SPLs were created in the early 1980s to describe the language proficiency of the Southeast Asian refugee population entering the United States at that time. Scores for all of CAL's adult ESL assessments were correlated to these SPLs. Due to the low level of native language literacy among this refugee population, and with the expectation that their oral English proficiency would be higher than reading and writing proficiency, the original reading and writing SPLs were not aligned with the speaking and listening SPLs.

In 1997, the speaking and listening SPLs were revised by the Spring Institute. In 2002, the Office of Refugee Resettlement provided a grant to the Spring Institute to revise the reading and writing SPLs to reflect descriptors that were more aligned with one another and would better describe the current adult English learner population. In 2005, these new SPLs were posted on the Center for Adult English Language Acquisition (CAELA) Web site. These can be viewed at www.cal.org/caela under ESL Resources.

What these changes mean for CAL's adult ESL assessments

Score ranges for all CAL adult ESL assessments have been realigned to match the revised NRS descriptors and SPLs. For your convenience, we have provided the tables on the reverse side of this flyer. They outline the relationship between the revised NRS descriptors and scores on *BEST Plus*, the *BEST Oral Interview Section*, and the revised *BEST Literacy* to be released on October 1, 2006. Adult ESL program and testing coordinators should also note that exit criteria for the new Advanced ESL level have been lowered by the U.S. Department of Education for all NRS reporting from SPL 8 to SPL 7.

If you have questions, or for further information about CAL's adult ESL assessments, please call toll-free 1-866-845-BEST (2378) or email best-plus@cal.org.

Correlating the Revised NRS Levels, SPLs and Scores on CAL's Adult ESL Assessments

TABLE 1: Correlating the Revised NRS Levels, SPLs and *BEST Plus* Scores

| <i>NRS Educational Functioning Level</i> | <i>Student Performance Levels (SPLs)</i> | <i>BEST Plus Score Range</i> |
|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Beginning ESL Literacy | 0 - 1 | 400 and below |
| Low Beginning ESL | 2 | 401 - 417 |
| High Beginning ESL | 3 | 418 - 438 |
| Low Intermediate ESL | 4 | 439 - 472 |
| High Intermediate ESL | 5 | 473 - 506 |
| Advanced ESL | 6 | 507 - 540 |
| Exit Criteria | 7 | 541 and above |

TABLE 2: Correlating the Revised NRS Levels, SPLs and *BEST Oral Interview* Scores

| <i>NRS Educational Functioning Level</i> | <i>Student Performance Levels (SPLs)</i> | <i>BEST Oral Interview Score Range</i> |
|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Beginning ESL Literacy | 0 - 1 | 0 - 15 |
| Low Beginning ESL | 2 | 16 - 28 |
| High Beginning ESL | 3 | 29 - 41 |
| Low Intermediate ESL | 4 | 42 - 50 |
| High Intermediate ESL | 5 | 51 - 57 |
| Advanced ESL | 6 | 58 - 64 |
| Exit Criteria | 7 | 65 and above |

TABLE 3: Correlating the Revised NRS Levels, SPLs and *BEST Literacy* Scores

| <i>NRS Educational Functioning Level</i> | <i>Student Performance Levels (SPLs)</i> | <i>BEST Literacy Score Range</i> |
|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Beginning ESL Literacy | 0 - 1 | 0 - 7 |
| Low Beginning ESL | 2 | 8 - 35 |
| High Beginning ESL | 3 | 36 - 46 |
| Low Intermediate ESL | 4 | 47 - 53 |
| High Intermediate ESL | 5-6 | 54 - 65 |
| Advanced ESL | 7 | 66 and above |